

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GRAYSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in favor of peace. I am joined in that by nearly 100,000 people who have signed a petition urging Congress to stop the escalation of the war in Afghanistan. This is the petition from the group Rethink Afghanistan.

President Obama has decided to send more than 30,000 extra troops to Afghanistan at a cost of more than \$100 billion a year, but America cannot afford a war that does not make us safer; and Congress has the power to stop that escalation. Vote "no" on any spending bill that would send more troops to Afghanistan.

I agree with that petition. It took only about 1,000 Special Forces troops to overthrow the Taliban in 2001. Why would we need 100 times that many to keep them out now? This occupation is an 18th-century strategy against a 14th-century enemy.

We have done enough to help and secure the Pashtuns, the Tajiks and the Hazara. It's about time we start to think of ourselves. Instead of spending billions on the war, we need to spend it on America. End the war now.

DEMOCRATS ARE COMMITTED TO JOBS PROGRAM

(Mr. ELLISON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, after nearly a decade of handing over middle class tax dollars to the wealthiest 1 percent, after nearly a decade of policy that encouraged million-dollar CEO bonuses over raises for American workers, we are witnessing the results of nearly a decade of complete Republican control of the Federal Government.

They handed President Obama and this Congress two wars, hundreds of billions of dollars in debt, crumbling national infrastructure, a home mortgage crisis—one in eight mortgages in default or foreclosure—a global climate crisis, and a financial sector ravaged by greed and lax regulation.

In short, this greatest economic and financial crisis since the Great Depression should be called the "Republican recession." And then, they handed it all off to President Obama and now have the audacity to ask, Where are the jobs? Well, the jobs are coming. The jobs are being built right now because Democrats are focusing on jobs. Democrats are committed to a jobs program that talks about our infrastructure, retaining public employees, and building America's future again.

WE NEED TO HELP THE UNEMPLOYED

(Mr. COHEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, The New York Times and CBS released a poll re-

cently that showed what the feelings are and the effects of unemployment on Americans. We've had 10 percent unemployment and many people that are long-term unemployed. The effects are devastating.

People who are unemployed are more likely not to have health insurance and have difficulty and give up getting medical care. That costs the public later with emergency room visits and costs us more money. They have more problems with depression and anxiety, and yet can't afford medical treatment. Again, problems arise. They have lost their homes, neighborhoods suffer, crime increases, neighborhood values decrease.

The loss of jobs has hurt millions of Americans and others because of the effects on the economy, on government, and on neighborhoods. But the people who have lost their jobs know why they have lost their jobs. Twenty-six percent specifically say the reason they've lost their jobs is because of President Bush and the policies that were brought about during the time he was President. That is obvious. The second largest group is Wall Street bankers. We need to help the unemployed. We need to find jobs.

WALL STREET REFORM PACKAGE

(Mr. WALZ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, among the speakers who have just addressed this House are a high school teacher, a nurse, a social worker, a small business owner, and a criminal prosecutor. And they stood hand in hand for working families on Main Street to restore responsibility and accountability to Wall Street last week.

After years of recklessness and unchecked greed that have now cost millions their jobs, their homes, and their life savings, we finally passed long-overdue commonsense reforms. These reforms protect investors and consumers from the excesses of those who will gamble other people's hard-earned money and closed loopholes in existing laws. They bring about an end to taxpayer bailouts and a belief that a firm is too big to fail.

Financial markets work best when they are transparent, allowing investors to make smart decisions and our capital system to flourish; but they also require cops on the beat to protect consumers from fraud and abuse. The Wall Street reform package we passed strengthens our markets and our economies, giving people confidence again to invest in America and our growth towards prosperity.

□ 1045

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DRIEHAUS). Pursuant to clause 8 of rule

XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

AUTHORITY TO CONVERT CERTAIN OVERSEAS LIMITED APPOINTMENTS TO PERMANENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1517) to allow certain U.S. Customs and Border Protection employees who serve under an overseas limited appointment for at least 2 years, and whose service is rated fully successful or higher throughout that time, to be converted to a permanent appointment in the competitive service, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1517

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. DEFINITIONS.

For purposes of this Act—

(1) the term "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection;

(2) the term "U.S. Customs and Border Protection" means U.S. Customs and Border Protection of the Department of Homeland Security;

(3) the term "competitive service" has the meaning given such term by section 2102 of title 5, United States Code; and

(4) the term "overseas limited appointment" means an appointment under—

(A) subpart B of part 301 of title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations, as in effect on January 1, 2008; or

(B) any similar antecedent or succeeding authority, as determined by the Commissioner.

SEC. 2. AUTHORITY TO CONVERT CERTAIN OVERSEAS LIMITED APPOINTMENTS TO PERMANENT APPOINTMENTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding chapter 33 of title 5, United States Code, or any other provision of law relating to the examination, certification, and appointment of individuals in the competitive service, the Commissioner may convert an employee serving under an overseas limited appointment within U.S. Customs and Border Protection to a permanent appointment in the competitive service within U.S. Customs and Border Protection, if—

(1) as of the time of conversion, the employee has completed at least 2 years of current continuous service under 1 or more overseas limited appointments; and

(2) the employee's performance has, throughout the period of continuous service referred to in paragraph (1), been rated at least fully successful or the equivalent. An employee whose appointment is converted under the preceding sentence acquires competitive status upon conversion.

(b) INDEMNIFICATION AND PRIVILEGES.—

(1) INDEMNIFICATION.—The United States shall, in the case of any individual whose appointment is converted under subsection (a), indemnify and hold such individual harmless from any claim arising from any event, act, or omission—

(A) that arises from the exercise of such individual's official duties, including by reason

of such individual's residency status, in the foreign country in which such individual resides at the time of conversion,

(B) for which the individual would not have been liable had the individual enjoyed the same privileges and immunities in the foreign country as an individual who either was a permanent employee, or was not a permanent resident, in the foreign country at the time of the event, act, or omission involved, and

(C) that occurs before, on, or after the date of the enactment of this Act, including any claim for taxes owed to the foreign country or a subdivision thereof.

(2) SERVICES AND PAYMENTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—In the case of any individual whose appointment is converted under subsection (a), the United States shall provide to such individual (including any dependents) services and monetary payments—

(i) equivalent to the services and monetary payments provided to other Customs and Border Protection employees in similar positions (and their dependents) in the same country of assignment by international agreement, an exchange of notes, or other diplomatic policy; and

(ii) for which such individual (including any dependents) was not eligible by reason of such individual's overseas limited appointment.

(B) APPLICABILITY.—Services and payments under this paragraph shall be provided to an individual (including any dependents) to the same extent and in the same manner as if such individual had held a permanent appointment in the competitive service throughout the period described in subsection (a)(1). The preceding sentence shall, in the case of any individual, be effective as of the first day of the period described in subsection (a)(1) with respect to such individual.

(C) GUIDANCE ON IMPLEMENTATION.—The Commissioner shall implement the conversion of an employee serving under an overseas limited appointment to a permanent appointment in the competitive service in a manner that—

(1) meets the operational needs of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection; and

(2) to the greatest extent practicable, is not disruptive to the employees affected under this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CUELLAR) and the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. ROGERS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous materials on the bill that is under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill and yield myself such time as I may consume.

H.R. 1517 would help fix a previous hiring error for a select number of employees serving overseas in positions for Customs and Border Protection. Through no fault of their own, there are about 35 employees in several CBP pre-clearance locations across the globe that were hired under a limited

term appointment by the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Some of those workers have been employed, Mr. Speaker, since 1987, with the majority hired in the mid-1990s. Mr. Speaker, they have been, for the most part, treated the same way as other CBP officers and personnel, regardless of their initial appointment status. However these employees, these hardworking employees, unbeknownst to them, were in personnel limbo for the past 15 years to 20 years and were not covered by the protections and immunities afforded to permanent CBP employees engaged in similar work.

This personnel situation was initially brought to the employees' attention in 2005. Since then, the CBP, OPM, and the Department of State have been trying to fix this glitch, but they realize that they need the help of Congress. This is why H.R. 1517 will give the CBP Commissioner the authority to non-competitively convert these 35 employees to full-time permanent civil service positions.

Doing so would not only ensure that these employees continue to receive their appropriate benefits but also will provide them with the protections they deserve as dedicated employees serving the CBP mission abroad. This ability to convert these employees will also ensure that CBP and that the United States honor the agreements between our countries and others such as Ireland.

Going forward, it is our hope that the Commissioner will take the past histories of these dedicated 35 individuals into account when determining their future. As I had mentioned, through no fault of their own, these employees find themselves in this very difficult situation.

Other employees assigned to work overseas rotate back to the U.S. after a period of time. The majority of these employees affected by the bill, however, have been at their posts for many years and have put down roots in these locations.

In light of these employees' unique circumstances, the bill provides guidance to the Commissioner, stating that the implementation of the bill shall, number one, meet the operational needs of CBP and, number two, to the greatest extent practicable, not be disruptive to this discrete number of affected employees.

In our attempt to right the system, CBP should not unduly disrupt the lives of these dedicated individuals who have provided a very valuable service to our country.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM,

Washington, DC, December 2, 2009.

Hon. BENNIE THOMPSON,

Chairman, Committee on Homeland Security, Ford House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN THOMPSON: I am writing to confirm our mutual understanding with respect to the consideration of H.R. 1517, a bill to allow certain U.S. Customs and Border

Protection employees to be converted to a permanent appointment in the competitive service.

I appreciate your effort to consult with the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform regarding those provisions of H.R. 1517 that fall within the Oversight Committee's jurisdiction.

Given the importance of moving this bill forward promptly, I do not intend to object to its consideration in the House. However, I do so only with the understanding that this procedure should not be construed to prejudice this Committee's jurisdictional interest or prerogatives in the subject matter of H.R. 1517, or any other similar legislation.

I would also request your support for the appointment of conferees from the Oversight Committee should H.R. 1517 or a similar Senate bill be considered in conference with the Senate.

Finally, I request that you include our exchange of letters on this matter in the Congressional Record during consideration of this legislation on the House floor.

Sincerely,

EDOLPHUS TOWNS,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,
Washington, DC, December 2, 2009.

Hon. EDOLPHUS TOWNS,

Chairman, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN TOWNS: Thank you for your letter regarding H.R. 1517, a bill to allow certain U.S. Customs and Border Protection employees to be converted to a permanent appointment in the competitive service, introduced by Congressman Eliot L. Engel on March 16, 2009.

I acknowledge that H.R. 1517 contains provisions within the jurisdictional interest of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. I appreciate your agreement to forgo further consideration or action on this legislation to ensure the timely consideration of this legislation, and acknowledge that your decision to do so does not affect the jurisdiction of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

Further, I recognize that your Committee reserves the right to seek appointment of conferees on the bill for the portions of the bill that are within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and I agree to support such a request.

I will ensure that this exchange of letters is included in the legislative report on H.R. 1517 and in the Congressional Record during floor consideration of the bill. I look forward to working with you on this legislation and other matters of great importance to this nation.

Sincerely,

BENNIE G. THOMPSON,
Chairman.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1517 to correct the hiring status of approximately 30 Customs and Border Protection officers stationed overseas under the wrong hiring appointments.

I appreciate the opportunity to stand in support of this legislation in the place of Ranking Member PETER KING, the Republican sponsor of the bill.

H.R. 1517 grants special authority to the Commissioner of Customs and Border Protection to noncompetitively convert about 30 CBP employees mistakenly hired under an overseas limited deployment to permanent status stationed at the overseas pre-inspection posts.

CBP operates pre-clearance stations at 15 foreign airports where travelers to the U.S. are able to undergo entry inspections before boarding their planes. This initiative facilitates travel while adding an important security benefit.

Unfortunately, this hiring error, if not addressed, could force these employees to transition into locally hired staff, much like Foreign Service nationals at embassies, or to return to the United States and compete for domestic CBP positions. Through no fault of their own these employees are now facing the problems with their employment status due to a mistake made years ago when they were initially hired. The Congressional Budget Office analysis shows no significant impact from this legislation, as these are existing employees who only need a category adjustment to their employment records.

I would like to highlight and express appreciation for the bipartisan manner in which this legislation was developed. Congressman ENGEL and Ranking Member KING worked together to develop this bill, and both Chairwoman SANCHEZ and Chairman THOMPSON sponsored this bill as it moved unanimously through our committee.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) who is the author of this bill and has been working with the ranking member, Mr. KING of New York.

Mr. ENGEL. I thank the gentleman, my good friend from Texas, for yielding to me. I appreciate the comments made by Mr. ROGERS as well.

Mr. Speaker, this bill rights a wrong. It's a very technical bill, but the bottom line is that 35 loyal and hard-working Federal employees stationed overseas, working for America, are being treated unfairly, and the bill corrects this. When I was in Ireland at the Customs post, I had a chance to speak with some of these employees, and I became convinced that they were not being treated fairly.

I rise today in support of my legislation, H.R. 1517, for the conversion of certain overseas Customs and Border Protection employees. I would also like to give special recognition to my colleague and friend, Representative PETER KING of New York, for the hard work that he has put into this legislation as well.

H.R. 1517 would grant the Commissioner of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection the authority to noncompetitively convert employees serv-

ing on overseas limited appointments into permanent employees. The need for this legislation was brought to my attention by 15 U.S. CBP employees serving at pre-clearance centers in Ireland, who were incorrectly hired by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. These employees were hired on overseas temporary appointments, but the work requirement evolved into a permanent basis.

There are two ways for a Federal agency to fill permanent overseas positions: one, by hiring locally engaged staff or, two, by U.S. direct hire. Yet because an agreement between the United States and Ireland requires that all pre-clearance employees be permanent employees, and, by definition, employees on overseas appointments are limited employees, albeit it in this case limited for an indefinite duration, CBP is technically in violation of the two countries' agreement.

More troubling to me, the 15 employees on overseas limited appointments are not covered by the protections and immunities afforded by the agreement to permanent U.S. pre-clearance employees.

Later, I learned the number of employees in similar positions included over 30 other CBP employees in Aruba, the Bahamas, Bermuda, and Canada. It has been through no fault of their own that these loyal employees, some of whom have been protecting our country for almost 20 years, are now in limbo.

Without this legislation, they will either have to become locally engaged staff, who are compensated by and receive benefits from the Irish government, or be placed into competitive positions that will require a return to the U.S. Some of them have families and have been living in Ireland working for the U.S. as American citizens, a choice that would destroy an established way of life in Ireland if they were forced to come to the United States, or a career with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection. They would have to choose, and that's not right. This was done through no fault of their own.

This bill, H.R. 1517, would allow these employees to stay close to their families and keep their positions protecting our country.

I would like to applaud the Homeland Security Committee for including language encouraging the CBP Commissioner not to be too disruptive to the employees when implementing this legislation. I recognize the standard CBP policy is for employees serving at overseas positions to rotate back to the United States after 5 years. However, in this extreme circumstance, it would be best for the CBP to allow the employees to continue to serve where they are currently with the years of experience they bring to their positions.

Let me say in closing, H.R. 1517 is a bipartisan bill. It is supported by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the National Treasury Employees Union, which represents the employees.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. CUELLAR. I yield an additional 1 minute to the gentleman from New York.

Mr. ENGEL. I thank the gentleman. This is a bipartisan bill. I repeat: It is supported by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the National Treasury Employees Union, which represents the employees. Each has had the opportunity for input into the final legislation.

I would strongly encourage my colleagues to join with me in support, again, of this bipartisan legislation. Continued employment of these individuals is in the best interest of CBP and the best interest of our country as the work requirement remains, and it's critical to CBP protecting our Nation's borders.

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers. At this time I would urge Members to support the bill.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support this important legislation that Mr. ENGEL has been working on, along with the ranking member, Mr. PETER KING of New York. This is a piece of legislation that will help those employees that have been working for our country. I would ask all Members to support this important legislation.

Ms. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Homeland Security Committee, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1517. This legislation will allow certain U.S. Customs and Border Protection employees who serve under an overseas limited appointment for at least 2 years, and whose service is rated fully successful or higher throughout that time, to be converted to a permanent appointment in the competitive service.

I would like to acknowledge Speaker PELOSI and Chairman THOMPSON for their leadership in bringing this important bill to the floor. I would also like to thank my colleague Congressman ENGEL, who worked so hard authoring this important legislation.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1517 would correct a longstanding classification problem among a small group of Customs and Border personnel that were hired before DHS was created. These 35 people are working overseas, mostly in Ireland, and need to be properly classified as CBP staff. I am pleased that the Homeland Security Committee has taken action to correct this problem and that this bill has come before the full Congress today.

I support H.R. 1517 because it is an efficient fix to this classification issue. Our Customs and Border personnel work so hard every day to keep us safe, and they deserve prompt action by this body to correct any problems in classification that could prevent them from receiving any appointments they may deserve.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 1517.

Mr. CUELLAR. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by

the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CUELLAR) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1517, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

FIRST RESPONDER ANTI-TERRORISM TRAINING RESOURCES ACT

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3978) to amend the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007 to authorize the Secretary of Homeland Security to accept and use gifts for otherwise authorized activities of the Center for Domestic Preparedness that are related to preparedness for and response to terrorism, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3978

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "First Responder Anti-Terrorism Training Resources Act".

SEC. 2. ACCEPTANCE OF GIFTS FOR FIRST RESPONDER TERRORISM PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE TRAINING.

Section 1204 of the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007 (6 U.S.C. 1102) is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(f) ACCEPTANCE OF GIFTS.—

“(1) AUTHORITY.—Notwithstanding section 873(b) of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 453(b)), the Secretary may accept and use gifts of property, both real and personal, and may accept gifts of services, including from guest lecturers, for otherwise authorized activities of the Center for Domestic Preparedness that are related to preparedness for and response to terrorism.

“(2) REPORT.—The Secretary shall report annually to the Committee on Homeland Security of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate—

“(A) any gifts that were accepted under this subsection in the preceding year;

“(B) how such gifts contribute to the mission of the Center for Domestic Preparedness; and

“(C) the amount of Federal savings that were generated from the acceptance of such gifts.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CUELLAR) and the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. ROGERS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days with which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous materials on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill and yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3978, which is sponsored by my friend from Alabama (Mr. ROGERS). I am pleased to serve with Mr. ROGERS on the Emergency Communications, Preparedness, and Response Subcommittee. He is the ranking member and works with us in a very bipartisan manner. I thank him for his service.

Mr. ROGERS' district is home to the Center For Domestic Preparedness. It is the premier training site for our Nation's first responders, and it is the Department of Homeland Security's only federally chartered weapons of mass destruction training center.

DHS has facilitated training at the center for thousands of first responders from all 50 States, territories and the District of Columbia. Given the center's prominence in the first responders' community, it often receives offers of gifts and donations from a variety of sources. These donations and services include training, displays, emergency response equipment, and offers of guest lectures.

□ 1100

These donations and gifts would strengthen the center's ability to offer high-quality emergency response training.

Unfortunately, the center currently lacks the legal authority at this time to accept these types of services. H.R. 3978 will permit the Secretary of Homeland Security to accept and use gifts for otherwise authorized activities of the Center for Domestic Preparedness that are related to preparedness for and in response to terrorism.

The legislation further directs DHS to report annually to the Congress on any gifts that were accepted in the preceding year and how they have contributed to the center's mission. Other DHS-supported training centers are permitted to accept gifts and donations, and it is past due to give the Center for Domestic Preparedness the same authority.

I urge all my colleagues to support H.R. 3978.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the First Responder Anti-Terrorism Training Resources Act.

H.R. 3978, which I introduced last month, ensures that first responders who train at East Alabama's Center for Domestic Preparedness have access to even better training resources. As many here know, the Center for Domestic Preparedness, located in my district in Anniston, Alabama, delivers one-of-a-kind training to America's emergency responders. It's our Nation's premier all-hazards training center. It's also the only federally chartered weapons of mass destruction training center in the Nation. Responders from all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories have trained at the CDP. In fact, this year the CDP celebrated its 500,000th graduate.

Like other first responder training centers, often the CDP receives offers of donations, such as railcars, trailers, and emergency response equipment, to assist their training courses. However, since the CDP's activities are conducted under the 9/11 Act of 2007 rather than the Stafford Act, the CDP lacks the legal authority to accept donations that could further training resources.

My bill fixes that problem. It amends the 9/11 Act so that the CDP may accept donations of property and services for antiterrorism and training activities. It's a win-win for our first responders, the taxpayer, and this important east Alabama training facility.

I would like to thank my good friend from Texas (Mr. CUELLAR) for supporting this bill and holding a markup in the subcommittee last month. I would also like to thank the full committee chairman, Mr. THOMPSON, for holding a markup in the full committee.

I urge my colleagues to support this important measure.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support this important Homeland Security legislation. The gentleman from Alabama has worked very hard, has been very dedicated in this piece of legislation, and I would ask all my colleagues to support this important legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CUELLAR) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3978.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further